



THIS WAS FORT UTAH (also known as Fort Provo) as interpreted in painting by Samuel Jepperson, early-day Provo artist. Note bastian for cannon erected in center. Small stream in foreground was from spring about 25 rods northeast of fort from which the settlers obtained culinary water. Original fort was located 20 rods east of present Geneva Road, about 30 rods south of Provo River. (Photoprint by Joseph M. Boel)

#### Beginning of Colonization In Provo

## *Fort Utah: First Pioneer Settlement in Valley*

(First of two articles)

Announcement that the Utah Lake Lions Club, in cooperation with Provo City, will build a public park at the site of old Fort Utah has prompted many questions:

- Fort Utah, you might say, was Provo's first housing project—a sizable number of log cabins inside a stockade built for protection against the Indians.

## Two Locations

Originally it was built on the south side of Provo River about 20 rods east of the present Geneva Road and about 40 rods north of Center Street—or just a short distance northeast of the historical marker erected in 1937 by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers (Provo Camp 7) on the Walter Cox property to commemorate its place in history.

Was the first fort actually dismantled and moved or did it remain in use at least until after the new one was completed? This is a question for which there seems no clearcut answer. Both versions can be found in Provo histories. With Indians hostilities a constant threat, logic suggests the pioneers would not have dismantled one fort until the other were at least partially completed.

Decision to send about 30 men to colonize Utah Valley "for the purpose of farming and fishing and instructing the Indians" was made at a council meeting March 10, 1849 at the home of Heber C. Kimball in Salt Lake City, with Brigham Young presiding, according to Church historical records.

The settlers and their families numbered about 150 souls, according to historians. They entered the valley late in March (there is controversy on the actual date and this will be subject of a subsequent article

At the site where the original Fort Utah was built, the pioneers found fertile soil to the east, south and west; an abundance of timber, especially from "Boxelder Island" where the river forked a short distance to the west; and ample water.

Fort Utah was pretty well completed six weeks after the energetic settlers began construction. This description of the fort comes from PROVO, PIONEER MORMON CITY, published in 1942 by the Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration:

by a 14-foot stockade with gates at the east and west ends. Boxelder trees, more durable and more accessible than cottonwood trees, were used for lumber. Within the stockade, log cabins, generally roofed with split lumber and dirt, were grouped side by side. Each boasted two cloth-covered windows. (The pioneers had no glass at that time.) Puncheons were used for flooring. The vacant spaces between the houses were filled with pickets embedded closely together in the ground. A cattle corral, attached to the southeast corner of the stockade, was used at night, and a guardhouse was erected within the corral. Smaller private corrals were placed behind some of the cabins. A brass cannon, upon the mound, commanded the surrounding territory. . . ."

Periodically they fired the cannon to impress the Indians. Despite this—and despite Brigham Young's advise to “feed

Unlike Salt Lake Valley, which had not been a favorite Indian campground, Utah Valley was a treasured haunt and the annual gathering place of the Ute tribes during the spawning season when fish moving up the river from Utah Lake could be caught with little effort for traditional feasting.

Indian-settler relations were further kept off balance repeated by thefts and threats by the former and an unwarranted killing of an Indian by three whites Aug. 1, 1849 in an altercation over a shirt allegedly stolen by him.

(To be concluded.)